

Sermon **Trusting the Process** by Virginia E Voigt

Trust the process you say? It's a lot easier said than done if you are mired in depression, grief, and feeling alone. When you are in a prolonged sad or depressed state, you may ask, how can I trust the process when so far nothing has changed and I'm suffering mightily? Nothing seems to alleviate a deep sense that I am alone and will never feel good about myself or my life again.

Trust for me is based on both knowledge and faith from my lived experience. Science tells me that therapy and medication can offer the spark of motion and hope needed to initiate action. My faith is based on relational and transcendental experience.

Relationships have tremendous power to allow me to borrow another's estimation of my worthiness when I doubt my own. Communities allow me to have a sense of belonging and opportunity to contribute to endeavors larger than myself. There have been crucial moments in my life in which I have received unexpected grace from a force in nature which has allowed me to turn my life in a healthier and more joyful direction. The abundance in nature allows me to experience myself as a small, but integral part of the wonder and beauty of the oneness of everything. Feeling the strength in my body through physical exertion leads me to feel my own sense of power in a visceral way. Music can grab a hold of my soul, inspiring me to act.

When I am having trouble trusting the process of grief or depression, I rely on the sources of my faith. In the most difficult times, I am unsure about how prolonged it will be and if I will be able to tolerate the suffering. My faith allows me to have a sense that things will be different in the future, in a positive way. However, I can lose my perspective and have a sinking feeling that I will emerge in a diminished state and the future will not be positive.

What keeps me afloat is the love of friends and family who embrace and validate me. Even when I'm not feeling good about myself they convince me of the good they see in me. I'm reminded of my goodness which gives me the strength to weather the rough times, and take action to improve myself. Loved ones offer companionship which leaves me less alone, and allows me to take the focus off myself and on to them. It is a welcomed distraction. I may be able to do some good for them, which will give me the sense that I can do something which is valued.

The communities I belong to such as Channing, offer spiritual, social, and professional engagement. It gives me solace and lets me know that I'm part of something bigger than myself. I experience solidarity with those with whom I have a common purpose, leading me not to feel so alone. Commitments to those communities can feel burdensome, but ultimately keep me meaningfully connected when I might otherwise withdraw or stay on the periphery. It also is a chance to experience positive regard for making contributions, and to learn valuable lessons. It is the commitments to organizations which push me to do better and let me know I'm competent, responsible, and adding value to my community. Consequently, I feel my own strength and gain perspective on my movement in the process.

I experienced the power of music to inspire and strengthen me spiritually during a recent church service. The choir performed "Draw the Circle Wide". The lyrics "no one stands alone, we'll stand side by side" expresses the spirit of inclusion and care for those that feel alone. "Draw the circle wide, wider still" expresses the sentiment that we should keep stretching ourselves to include everyone, even those with whom we disagree deeply; that connection with others' humanity is what is most important. My son and I were on a ski trip in February. There were multiple times when we had difficulties and other people offered help without us asking. We appreciated the kindness of strangers and suspected that some of them did not share our political beliefs. In those moments, our political beliefs were not important; the connection made with the warmth of human kindness trumped political division.